STRANGER THAN FICTION

Meetings of Old Soldiers Who Thought Each Other Dead.

How Col. Mussey Found a Long-Lost Brother—The Singular and Pathetic Story of Hugh Thompson, the Nameless Soldier.

[Special Washington Letter.]

"Hello, Jack Adams! I left you dead on the field thirty years ago! Are you really alive, or are you a materialized spirit? Let me pinch you and hug you."

Yes, it was really Corporal Adams, very well and very much alive. Col. Fred D. Mussey, the veteran Washington correspondent of the Cincinnati Commercial-Gazette, was sitting in his office on Newspaper row. Thousands of old soldiers were here attending the national encampment of the Grand

IN FRONT OF BATON ROUGE.

Army of the Republic. Col. Mussey had met many old friends whom he had not seen for a quarter of a century. But when Jack Adams came into the office the scene was dramatic beyond description. Col. Mussey acted like a man whose dearest brother had come back from the grave. He said:

"Why, my dear boy, I saw you killed. I saw a six-pound cannon ball cut you in two in front of Baton Rouge. We were in a charge, and I pressed on with the regiment. Other fellows were falling all around us, some of them killed, but nearly all of them wounded. We accounted for all of them, buried the dead and sent the others to hospitals. I supposed that fragments of your body were buried, for I never saw you after that cannon ball struck you."

"Yes, Fred, you are right about that cannon ball hitting me," said Adams, with a smile. "But it didn't cut me in two. As a matter of fact, it was a spent ball, and only grazed my right hip. I suppose it appeared to go clear through me. But you must remember that there was some little excitement just then, and maybe you got rattled. There was enough fighting and enough danger to rattle the bravest fellows that day. Well, the spent ball paralyzed me, and bruised me, and nearly killed me. But I was breathing, although unconscious, so they picked me up, put me in an ambulance and sent me to a field hospital. Then I was carried on to a hospital steamer, taken to a general hospital at New Orleans, and finally recovered. I never went to the front again, and it was many a day and many a month before I was sound and well again. But here I am again, in the body, and mighty glad to see my old friend and comrade again."

Col Mussey had a similar singular experience about the same time. We had desks in the same office room, and one evening he came over to see me, and said, with considerable excitement: "I have discovered my brother, Al. Mussey, after nearly thirty years of silence on his part. He left our Vermont home after the war, saying he would never come back until his fortune was made. We have never heard of him since; and now I have discovered him."

"Where is he, and how did you find him?" I inquired.

"It is providential," said Col. Mussey. "The pension office sends a typewritten slip every day giving the names of Ohio and Indiana soldiers to whom pensions have been issued. I never received a California slip before, because my paper does not circulate in California. And to-night in my envelope, by an error of some clerk, I found the California pension list. I was about to throw it in the waste basket when I saw the name of Albert W. Mussey. That must be my brother. He is in California. He has applied for a pension. It has been issued, and this slip bearing his name, the only California slip I have ever seen, has been wafted into my office. I will write to him."

The result of this peculiar incident was that Col. Mussey wrote to the pensioner, received a reply and then sent word to his venerable mother in Vermont that her eldest boy was still alive. Al Mussey had become a prosperous rancher. He had been silent for many years and dreaded to write to his home, lest sad news of the deaths of his kindred might come to him. But, after all, the family was reunited, and they all look upon that stray California pension list as a providential occurrence.

More remarkable than the story of Jack Adams is a thrilling romance which the records of the pension office disclose concerning Hugh Thompson, of Van Wert, O., a farmer lad who had enlisted in the Fifteenth Ohio infantry, September 1, 1862, and marched away to the front with the tens of thousands of other farmer laddies who comprised the bone and sinew of the rank and file of the armies of the union. At the battle of Chickamauga, as a comrade relates, while they were lying on the ground at the front to escape the tempest of balls that swept the thin woods where his regiment was engaged, a case shot, probably deflected from a tree, struck him in the head, and his face was instantly covered with blood. His companion spoke to him, but he did not answer. Just then the order to fall back was given. He was assisted to his feet, staggered a few feet in a dazed kind of a way, and fell in a heap as a confederate brigade swarmed into the woods, and his comrades were forced to leave him, evidently dying from a mortal wound. He never rejoined them. The regimental report of the adjutant for September, 1863, bears the note opposite his name: "Wounded and missing in the battle of Chickamauga, September 19, 1863." And so he disappeared from comrades and friends and home, one of the unknown dead, remembered only as an integer component of the myriads of soldier boys who gave their young lives for their country. His father, years afterward, applied for a pension on account of his service, his mother having died prior to his enlistment. No doubt was raised as to his death in the army, but the claim was rejected on the legal ground that the father was not dependent upon the services of his lost son.

From September 19, 1863, the day of the battle, until some time in February, 1870, the history of Hugh Thompson is a blank. He recovered his identity but partially, as he was tramping through the snow on a country road near the village of Cleveland, Ill. He was a strong, able-bodied man, comfortably dressed in a good working suit, with a pair of new boots on his feet and a coon-skin cap on his head. He carried an old-fashioned oil-cloth valise, and there on the lonely road, in the darkening twilight of that freezing February evening, Hugh Thompson, the wounded soldier of Chickamauga, "came to himself," as he expressed it. It was just as if at that moment he had awakened from a dreamless sleep of seven years and become conscious of existence. Who he was, or what he had done, or where he had been, he knew not. He knew that his name was Thompson, but called himself Henry instead of Hugh. What name he had formerly used he knew not. His mind was clouded, but the clouds were lifting. Old scenes came before him as dreams. He knew he had been in the army. He knew he had been in a battle and was lying on the ground while bullets were whizzing; but everybody told him the war had long been closed. How he came to be on that country road he never has known. It was a long jump in time, from the field of Chickamauga in 1863, to the village of Cleveland in 1870.

From Illinois he went to Kansas, and, sometime in 1880 or 1881, he became impressed with the belief that he had been a soldier in an Ohio regiment. He was not sure that his name was Thompson, nor certain that he was an Ohio soldier boy. The newspapers of Kansas took up the matter, gave accurate descriptions of him, and the strange history of the Nameless Soldier, as he came to be known, traveled to Ohio and was read in the columns of the Van Wert Ga-

HUGH CAME TO HIMSELF.

zette by his aged father. The personal description tallied in a measure with that of his long-lost son, and correspondence followed. But the clouded mind of the man contained no clear vision of Van Wert. He remembered vividly the home of his boyhood and wrote an exact description of it as he had last seen it, a quarter of a century before—log house and stone chimney, the well with the long sweep to raise the bucket, the high-banked stream that ran through the farm—all still as he had left them, for changes are slow in the homes of plain people of our country. Then, with many doubts, and as many hopes, he made his way to Van Wert, in 1887, and was easily identified by his family and former comrades. He applied for a pension, and the certificate directing payment to him as the wounded and missing Hugh Thompson, of Chickamauga, was forwarded in due course of time. This is the story as revealed by the official records of the pension office. It is a wonderful story, and fiction pales before its facts.

The story of Rip Van Winkle is thrilling to an audience when the old man pulls from his leathern pouch the old contract which Diedrich Van Beekman wanted him to sign, twenty years before. It is paralleled by a part of the evidence of the identification of Hugh Thompson. From the day of his wound and loss of memory, through all his wanderings he carried a little Testament given him by a sister, with an inscription in rhyme, when he enlisted. The sister, still living, recognized it at once when he exhibited it upon his return. He had kept the Testament his sister had given him; but he had forgotten the sister. When he saw her, however, he recognized her and with a glad cry rushed to her arms, and they sobbed and cried like children. It was a reunion the like of which was never depicted upon the mimic stage.

SMITH D. FRY.

Immense Draught of Fish.

The biggest haul of fish ever made at the Point Sauble grounds, near Green Bay, was taken a few days ago. The single haul of the seine brought up 8,453 pounds of fish, for which the lucky fisherman received the sum of $194.17. There were 5,870 pounds of perch, 1,835 pounds of yellow pike, 680 pounds of suckers and 77 pounds of catfish. Although the ground at Point Sauble has been seined for over thirty years, no catch equal to this has ever been made, and fishermen claim that it is a conclusive proof that the waters are not being depopulated of their fishy inhabitants, as is claimed by the enemies of seine fishing.

CHASSEURS DES ALPES.

An Interesting Branch of the French Military Family.

Hardy Soldiers Who Guard the Alpine Passes Leading from Italy Into France—How They Are Drilled, Trained and Housed.

[Special Paris (France) Letter.]

A short time ago, on the birthday of King Humbert, the Italian sovereign pardoned Capt. Romani, arrested not far from Ventimiglia as a French spy and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. The French government responded to this act of international courtesy by discharging Capt. Cavalotti and Lieut. Fabbri, of the Italian engineer corps, who had been sent to jail on somewhat slight proof as suspected of espionage on French terri-

A BRIEF HALT IN THE MOUNTAINS.

tory just beyond the Italian border. During 1894 not less than 127 Italians were stopped on French territory on the suspicion of playing the spy, and of these 61 were civilians and 66 military persons, while the Italian authorities have stopped 219 French men and women on the charge of espionage, of whom 17 were held and sentenced. These facts in themselves speak a language which is plain enough, for they show how suspicious one of these two leading Latin nations is of her neighbor and one-time ally, the other leading Latin nation. They show how both countries deem a war as within the possibilities of the near future and how strained their relations have really come to be since the establishment of the triple alliance whose member Italy has remained for over ten years.

It is owing to this regrettable state of things that France, as well as Italy, has made and is still making all the preparations for a war whose scene might be on the territory of either country. Now the Franco-Italian border is formed, for nearly the whole line, by chains of the Alps which, in their eastern and northern spurs, form also the dividing line between Switzerland and Germany, Switzerland and France, and Switzerland and Italy. Only on the French border those chains rise more abruptly and are even harder to surmount. Forts and fortresses, fortified and crenelated Alpine passes, narrow ditches and crevasses that may become tombs for myriads of solders some day, have been erected or strengthened on both sides of the frontier during the past decade, and on summits of isolated mountain peaks the black mouths of Krupp or Creuzot guns are now frowning and threatening where formerly the goat and chamois peaceably grazed. But one of the most characteristic innovations made in both armies was the organization, the drilling and the complete equipment of Alpine chasseur corps. The Italian army, as a matter of fact, had the nucleus of such a body even before. Victor Emmanuel, father of the present king, was himself a son of the mountains and an indefatigable climber and hunter of mufflon, chamois and Alpine bear, and to him, too, it was due that a veritable elite corps, the best and hardiest of his army, has existed for the past forty years, the *Cacciatori*, men inured to the dreadful hardships

CHASSEUR OFFICER AND ORDERLY RECONNOITERING.

of Alpine warfare and knowing the narrow defiles of the Italian Alps, the Julian and the Cottian, as well as their pockets.

In 1889 France finally followed suit, paterning her corps of Alpine chasseur after the Italian, not only in the matter of equipment but also in the training and exercising of the men. Within the frontier departments occupied by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth French army corps, twelve battalions of this new special troop were formed, backed up by twelve Alpine batteries, in all comprising about 6,000 men and 1,200 beasts of burden, notably mules and donkeys. This corps has been made up of recruits partly obtained from Savoy, partly from the Pyrenees department and from the maritime Alps, and they have been steadily improved in efficiency until they equal, if not surpass, the members of the Italian corps who had served as their models.

The winter just past has been a very severe one in that part of the world as well as elsewhere, and it has therefore served the French government to test, for the first time, on a large scale, the future availability of the Chasseurs des Alpes; and the test has turned out quite satisfactorily. Hitherto the chain of observatory stations, of small camps and detached forts up on the mountain passes had been abandoned year after year, as the snow began to fly, as it had been supposed that to stay in those exposed posts during the dreadful winter weather was humanly not possible, or at least fraught with great danger and probable loss of many men's lives or health.

These posts had been left unprotected from early in November until the snow on the peaks melted late in May or early in June, and all drilling and military marches and excursions had likewise ceased during that time. Last winter, however, a series of camps were kept in full operation, with altogether 1,900 men and a corresponding number of beasts, and frequent marches and other exercises have been indulged in, the total loss of life until March 10 numbering only 6. The largest of these hibernating camps have been maintained near the Col di Tenda and the Col des Echelles, each about 7,000 feet high. A company of chasseurs was quartered in each, with a captain, two lieutenants and the requisite number of non-commissioned officers, each housed in separate barracks, to which must be added the stables (with mules, Alpine dogs and live goats, sheep and rabbits, the latter for food), the provision house, the cellars, the workshop, etc.

What these hardy Alpine soldiers had most to contend with was to maintain communication with the nearest valleys and villages, and this was a task especially difficult this past winter, as the snow fell frequently, and, for the three weeks following Christmas, almost uninterruptedly. On the mountain sides the snow lay, in the middle of February, about three feet high, since which time it has slowly diminished day by day. To reestablish, after several days of violent snowstorm, communication with the nearest "base of operations," was often a herculean piece of work, and the men from the Col des Echelles repeatedly were forced to dig tunnels through mounds and high walls of snow that impeded their progress downwards.

The establishment of this French corps of Alpine chasseurs has spurred Spain to organize on her part a simi-

TUNNELING THROUGH THE SNOW.

lar corps, under Gen. Dominguez, which is to guard the passes leading from France through the Pyrenees into Spanish territory.

WOLF VON SCHIERBRAND.

When They May Be Married.

In Hungary a man may marry at the age of 18 and the girl at 16. In Spain, Portugal and Greece the respective ages are only 14 for the man(?) and 12 for the prospective bride. In France he must be 18 and she 15. In Russia the laws vary between 18 and 20 for the men and 15 and 16 for the women. In Switzerland the various cantons have different laws, and the minimum ages for marrying are 18 and 20 for the men and from 13 to 17 for girls. In Austria and Germany men seldom marry under 21, although the law allows it at 18. Girls may wed at 16 in these countries. In Egypt boys at 13 are often married, and brides of 10 and 12 are not scarce by any means. But India carries off the palm. Here marriages are closed in infancy, and a girl of 2 is sometimes married to a groom of 4 or 5 years.

How Are the Mighty Fallen.

In view of the fact that Egypt was once the center of civilization and learning, whence science radiated to every corner of the globe, vestiges of Egyptian lore being found even in this hemisphere, it is somewhat painful to think that the only item which the land of the Pharaohs now contributes to the world is onions, which are being shipped in huge quantities to the United States. And to make matters worse we are informed that the popular "baeli," as the Egyptian onion is called, owes its fine flavor as well as its size to the fact that the fields in which it is grown are fertilized with the powdered mummies of the sages who flourished on the banks of the Nile three thousand and four thousand years ago.

Our Population in 1900.

The estimated population of the United States in 1900, according to the best authorities, will be 76,639,854. This estimate is made by Carroll D. Wright, superintendent of the department of labor. It is based upon the estimates made by well-known statisticians, the known rates of increase and the various facts bearing upon the growth of population. The population on January 1, 1894, was 67,680,740, and the estimated growth is therefore rather more than 13¼ per cent. in six years.

An Arboreal Land Owner.

There is a tree at Athens, Ga., which is a property holder. In the early part of the century the land on which it stands was owned by Col. W. H. Jackson, who took delight in watching its growth. In his old age the tree had reached magnificent proportions, and the thought of its being destroyed was so repugnant that he recorded a deed conveying to it all the land within a radius of eight feet of its base.

ON THE SAFE SIDE.

Advertising Agent—What d'ye mean by sticking that "Cures Influenza" all over the place, eh?

Bill-Poster—Shure, now, I couldn't remimber which one it was for, so I thought I'd be on the safe side anyway.—Pall Mall Budget.

His Wife's Position.

"Now," said the bridegroom to the bride when they returned from the honeymoon trip, "let us have a clear understanding before we settle down to married life. Are you the president or vice president of this society?"

"I want to be neither president nor vice president," she answered. "I will be content with a subordinate position."

"What is that?"

"Comptroller of the treasury."—Texas Siftings.

A LOTTERY TICKET.

—Judge.

A Cheat.

Uncle Philander (standing before chewing gum slot machine)—This here thing's a cheat. I put my penny in all right, pushed the little bizness an' thet piece of gum come down inter sight, but here I've been watchin' an' waitin' half a hour an' the gol darn jigger hasn't begun to chew yet!—Life.

The Same Man.

In my travels I have noticed that the man who wants the earth,
And who pulls and hauls and elbows in to get the lower berth,
Is the same who always tells you, with his overflowing love,
That the atmosphere is better in the other berth above.

—Arkansaw Thomas Cat.

His Golden Wedding.

Jonesley—Coming around to my golden wedding next week?

Brownkins (indignantly)—Your godlen wedding! Why, man, you're not thirty-five.

Jonesley—No, but I've bagged an American heiress.—Judge.

Music, Heavenly Maid.

Hostess—Won't you play something for us, Miss Keynote?

Gifted Amateur—Certainly, if it is your desire. What would you prefer?

Hostess—Oh, anything, only so it isn't loud enough to interfere with the conversation.—N. Y. Weekly.

A Little Gardener.

"Mamma," said little Wilbur, coming up from the kitchen, "can't I have some o' the baked beans left over from breakfast for my garden? I think it would be nice to grow 'em so's cook wouldn't have to cook 'em."—Harper's Young People.

THE COOK'S ALTERNATIVE.

Bridget—Mr. Bildad, yer wife come into the kitchen this marnin' and insoolted me, an' it's wan av two things—either she laves this house or I does—Judge.

THE largest sailing ship afloat is the remodeled Persian Monarch, 3,993 tons measurement. Her iron masts are 184 feet high from the deck.

Protection That Protects.

Brownston—Yes, sir. My house has been robbed three times, and I live right in the middle of the city, too, with a policeman at every corner. I should think you'd be scared half to death living as you do, way off in the country.

Mr. Suburb—My house is never interfered with. There hasn't been a burglar in our section for years.

"Eh! Have you policemen there?"

"No. Nothing but guns."—N. Y. Weekly.

Baby's Masterpiece.

"I'm sure that baby is going to be a great artist," said the fond mother.

"Isn't he rather young to evince any talent?"

"That's just where he shows his genius. I left him where he could get some red ink on his fingers, and before I knew what he was doing he had decorated the library wall with one of the loveliest magazine posters you ever saw."—Washington Star.

Speculation in His Eye.

Benevolent Individual—Yes, sir, I hold that when a man makes a little extra money his first duty is to make his wife a present of a handsome dress.

Ordinary Individual — You are a philosopher, I presume?

Benevolent Individual—No, I'm a dry goods merchant.—Alex Sweet, in Texas Siftings.

The Porter Was Safe.

"We haven't relieved the Pullman porter of his wad," said a new train robber to his older companion, as they were about to move off, after going through the train.

"Honor among thieves," replied the veteran, as the robbers disappeared into the darkness.—Pittsburgh Chronicle-Telegraph.

ESTABLISHING A PRECEDENT.

Gentleman—What did you knock that little boy down for and then jump on him?

Small Boy—Well, I couldn't jump on him 'fore I knocked him down, could I?—Brooklyn Life.

A Reason.

"I think I know why a boy that doesn't know his lessons gets a whipping sometimes," said Wallie. "If he doesn't learn, it shows he isn't smart, so they whack him till he does smart."—Harper's Young People.

Not Competent to Judge.

Miss Chatter—What fool-killers cigarettes are. Don't you think so, Mr. Noodleby?

Mr. Noodleby—Weally, I couldn't say, Miss Chatter. I never smoked one in me life, dontcherknow.—Life.

One Thing at a Time.

"When I drink much I can't work, so I let it alone."

"The drinking?"

"No, the working."—Alex Sweet, in Texas Siftings.

She Wants a Change.

He—I think your family name is such a fine one.

She—Do you? I get dreadfully tired of it.—Detroit Free Press.

Truly Christian.

His kiss was like a blow unto
Her modesty; with meek
And truly Christian spirit
She turned the other cheek.

—Detroit Tribune.

He Comes After You.

Etiens—Is it correct to precede the father of your fiancee downstairs?

Guizziens—Very often you have to.—Truth.